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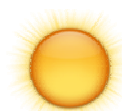
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Lawson visits county

Tuesday, August 21, 2012

BY JASON MOON, Managing Editor



Indiana Secretary of State Connie Lawson (right) paid a visit to the Clay County Clerk's Office Tuesday morning. While there, she met with Clay County Clerk of the Circuit Court Vickie Wheeler (left). [[Order this photo](#)]

Indiana Secretary of State Connie Lawson was in Clay County Tuesday morning, visiting with Clerk of the Circuit Court Vickie Wheeler.

The purpose of the visit was to discuss voting centers within Clay County. Lawson was appointed to the position in March.

According to Lawson, voting centers are polling places where any eligible voter in a county may go to vote.

"There is no wrong place to vote (with voting centers)," Lawson said. "It's more convenient for voters."

Lawson said a pilot program using voting centers took place from 2007-10 in Wayne, Tippecanoe and Cass counties. She added it was quite successful.

"For the most part, voters seem to be pleased," Lawson said. "And poll workers loved it."

Clay County has not gone to using voting centers yet, but Clerk of the Circuit Court Vickie Wheeler said she hopes to discuss this with county officials in the future.

"Right now, we have 23 precincts," Wheeler said. "By law, you only need two (voting centers)."

Wheeler said voting centers have been discussed in the past, but with no elections taking place next year, she hopes to move forward on the issue.

"We will be working on it next year because there is no election," she said.

In 2011, the Indiana General Assembly passed Senate Enrolled Act 32 and House Enrolled Act 1242. Both were signed by Gov. Mitch Daniels and now, counties have the option of using voting centers or not.

"It's a decision every county needs to make for itself," Lawson said.

Wheeler added at least two public hearings providing public input will be needed. In addition, discussion must take place with the Clay County Commissioners and Clay County Election Board.

"Hopefully, it will pass," Wheeler said.



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"There is a lot more flexibility with the voting center concept," Lawson added. "It saves so much hassle on election day. We think it is a good benefit for the voter."

Lawson added the use of voting centers would add up to less cost for counties during an election season.

"For cash strapped units of government, this seems to be a really good solution," Lawson said. "Over time, you can save a lot of money."

Lawson said with precincts, counties must have at least five people working and can have up to seven poll workers at each location. However, going to voting centers would reduce the amount of poll workers, saving counties in election costs.

Wheeler added Clay County has the equipment to conduct voting centers, which will save in further costs.

"(Using voting centers) would not cost the county any money," Wheeler said.

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